



October 15, 2014

Michael Collins, Director
Department of Public Works
City of Falls Church
300 Park Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22046

RE: Facilitating Green Infrastructure Practices for Stormwater Management and the Proposed Stormwater Project in Berman Park

The Board of Directors of the Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS) has been asked to support installation of a rain garden for stormwater management in Berman Park within the City of Falls Church. This project is part of a local Boy Scout Eagle Project.

VPIS strongly supports improved management of stormwater to reduce flooding and improve water quality and the health of local streams. We especially support use of “green infrastructure” infiltration practices, such as rain gardens, that encourage stormwater to be absorbed into the ground close to where it falls as an alternative to “grey infrastructure” projects that channel stormwater to local streams and to downstream communities. VPIS commends the City on providing engineering and logistical support for the Berman Park rain garden; indeed we have pledged to support it as well.

With an eye toward encouraging the City to make it easier for more “green infrastructure” projects to proliferate, the Board of VPIS brings two suggestions to your attention:

- 1) **Reduce High Cost of Rain Garden Media:** It is our understanding that the soil material (*i.e.*, media) that the City has specified for the project is very expensive, is only attainable from one location in Maryland, and comes with a high transportation cost. In the case of the Berman Park project, this media cost alone is estimated at over \$1,700. It is not clear whether the City is imposing this material standard for all rain gardens implemented in the City, including those developed for stormwater fund credits, or just for projects on City-owned land.

Although VPIS recognizes the need to assure that rain gardens function as designed, the Board encourages the City to review the media standard to determine if it can be adjusted to reduce costs. If the media standards must be maintained, we encourage the City to consider using funds from the stormwater fund to purchase the material in bulk and store it at the City yard to reduce material and transportation costs to both the City and parties implementing rain gardens to earn stormwater fund credits. This would have the benefit of

reducing the costs and encouraging the wider implementation of green infrastructure projects. There may also be cost effective alternatives such as preparing the media here in Falls Church or in cooperation with adjoining jurisdictions.

- 2) **Expand Investment of Stormwater Fund in Green Infrastructure:** VPIS has supported a number of projects involving improvements to City parks, including several Boy Scout Eagle Projects. VPIS believes that these projects benefit the City as a whole and are an important vehicle to encourage young people to undertake civic improvement projects.

In the case of a project that is specifically designed to improve stormwater management by improvements to City property, VPIS believes that the City should provide financial support from the Stormwater Utility Fund. This fund is made up of fees paid by City property owners and is intended to be used to improve stormwater management. The City has recognized that green infrastructure projects, like rain gardens, play an important role in stormwater management by providing stormwater fee credits for the implementation of these practices.

It is important to note that making stormwater fund investments in projects on City land does not require creating a formal “grant” program to owners of residential or commercial property for the implementation of “green infrastructure” practices. Although offering grants from the Stormwater Utility Fund to private property owners for “green infrastructure” in the future might be a good idea, it is not necessary to create a grant program to support the Berman Park project.

Finally, the VPIS Board anticipates that it may be asked for financial support for additional stormwater management projects on City land. VPIS funds available for community grants are very limited and funds used for stormwater projects on City property will not be available for community grants meeting other purposes. In the case of the Berman Park project, a decision by the City to use funds from the Stormwater Utility Fund for the project would allow VPIS to make up to \$1,700 available for other community grants.

The VPIS Board looks forward to working with the City to strengthen the stormwater management program.

Sincerely,



Michael E Connelly
President, Village Preservation and Improvement Society
On behalf of the Board

cc: Wyatt Shields, City Manager
Members of the City of Falls Church City Council
Daniel Schlitt, Director; Recreation and Parks
Chair and Members of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
Chair and Members of the Planning Commission